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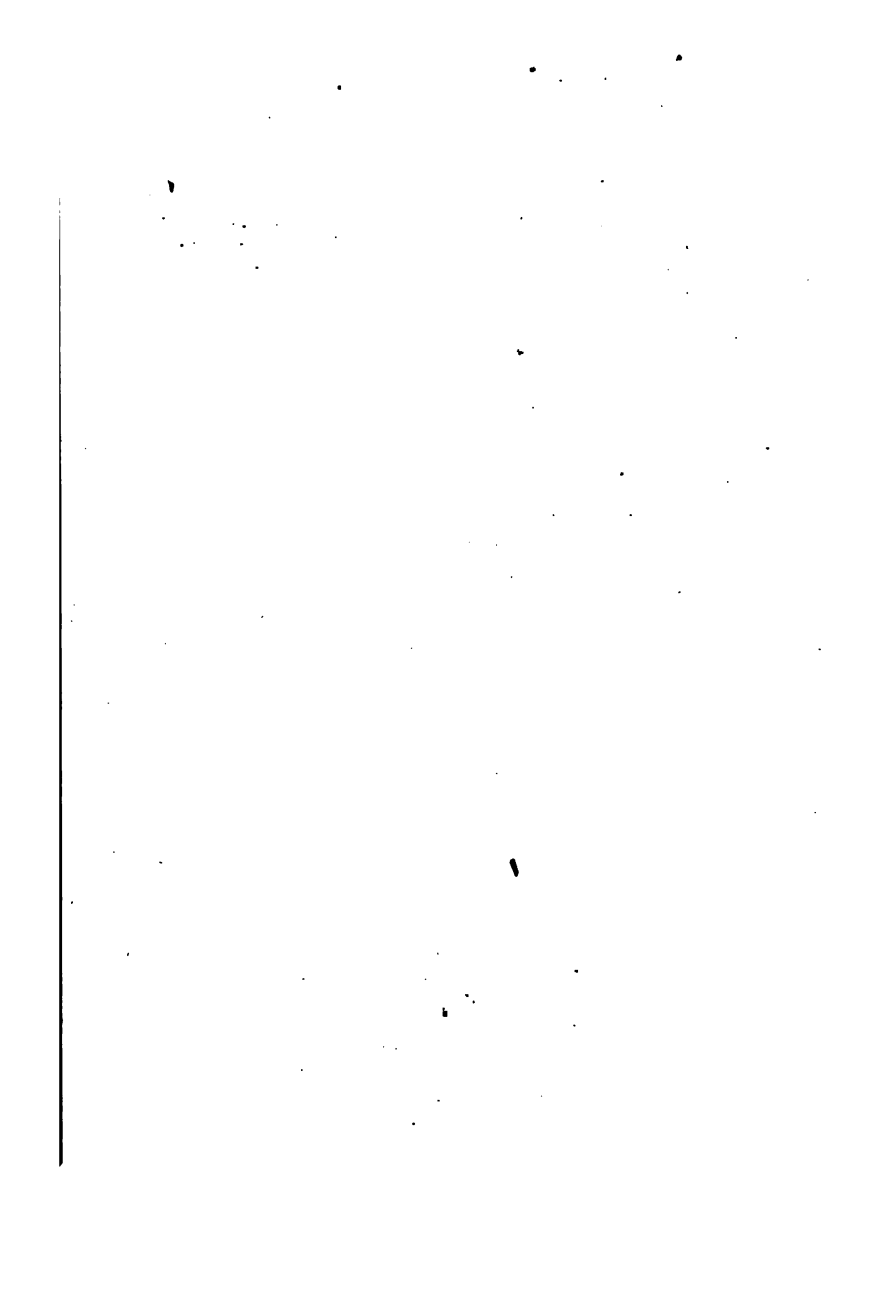
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THE SOUL'S LEGEND

DORA GREENWELL





THE SOUL'S LEGEND.

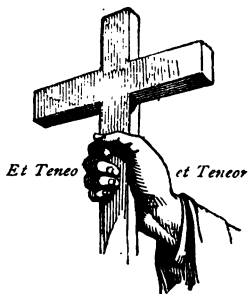
THE SOUL'S LEGEND

By DORA GREENWELL

*"Beneath the apple-tree
I espoused thee ;
There I gave thee My hand,
And thou wert there redeemed,
Where thy Mother was betrayed."*

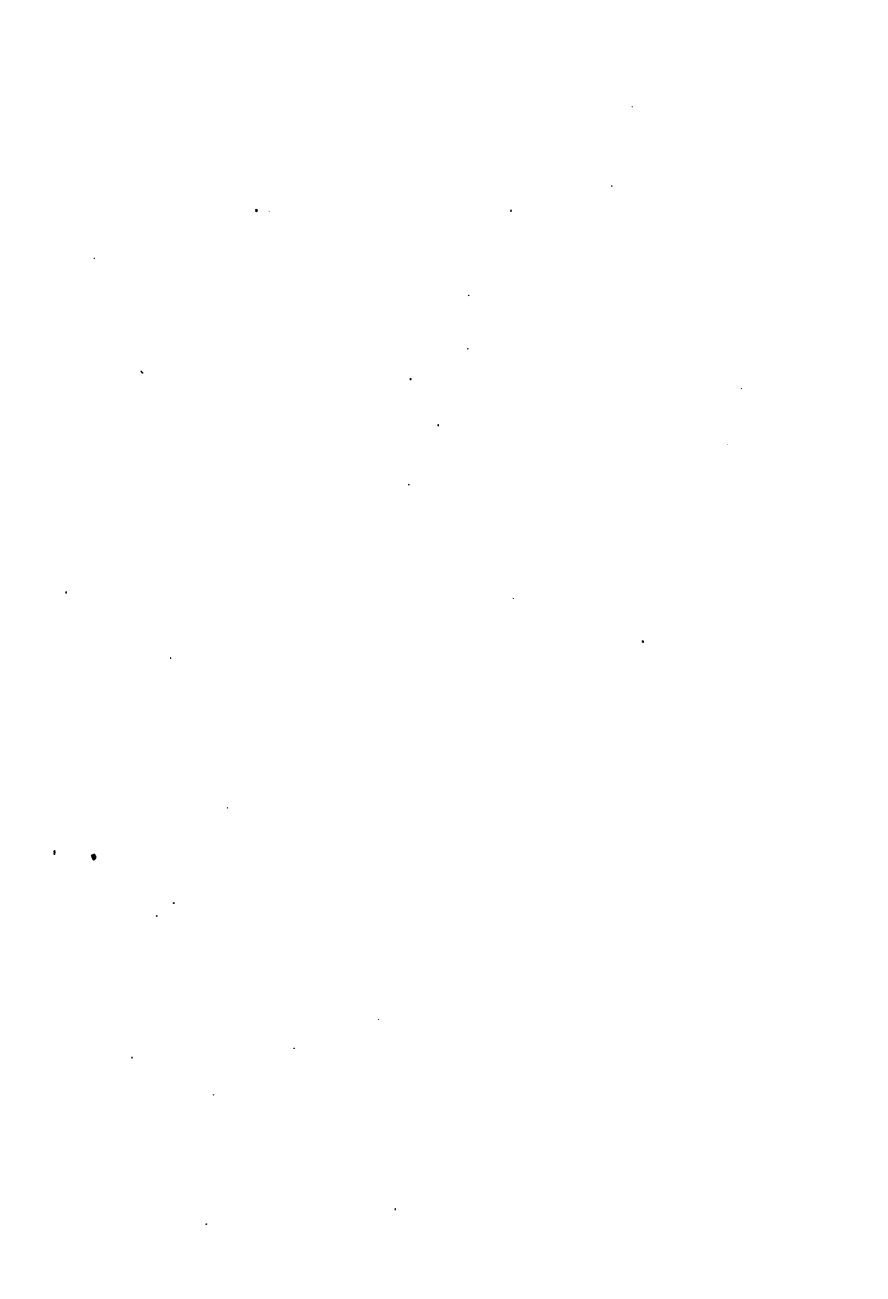
(Christ speaking to the human soul.)

ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS.



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L'ENVOI.

*H*AST seen a fair rose blow,
Blood-red, then white as snow?
The bird that loves her best
Lights never on her breast,
But sings afar where darkling olives grow.

The bird sang clear at morn,
It singeth clear at eve,
Its breast hath felt the thorn ;
For oft the rose's scorn,
And oft her love, hath made the sweet bird grieve.

And if its music brings
Most gladness or most grief,
Or if it only sings
To give its wound relief
I know not; but its song is broken, sweet, and brief.

*Full oft to me at close
Of Autumn eve it sings ;
No light wind stirs the rose ;
The air is full of wings
Unseen, and in the grass a sound of hidden springs.*

*Would any follow where
I hear it sing, I say
They shall not find that fair
Lone sunset garden ; there
None led me, and to none I show the way.*

*Two mighty angels, Love
And Pain, its warders be :
The one is winged to flee,
The other doth not move ;
Each bears a flaming sword, and each hath smitten
free.*

*Without the garden's gate
A level desert lies ;
A dim, colossal Fate
Peers over it, with eyes
Intent, impassive, blank of love or hate.*

*To earth enchained, its vast
Regard still questions doom,
Its stony shadow cast
Across the garden's bloom
Falls, and unlifted lies upon the garden's tomb.*

October 17th, 1870.







A SOLILOQUY.

THE HUMAN SOUL IN A GARDEN.

HERE thy first Father spake
With God at eve ; the snake
Curled, hid within the brake.

Here thy great Mother strayed,
And here was she betrayed.

Here, drops upon the sod
Fell from the brow of God.

And here, where roses bloom,
Thy God hath made His tomb.

And here, from One adored
From Him, her risen Lord,

A woman,* once accurst,
Despised and outraged, first
Love's messenger became ;
He called her by her Name.

* *St. Luke* viii. 2.



A MYSTERY.

THEY played of old within a garden; the beautiful child and her companion, who was nobler and more beloved than she.

I know not of her race or lineage, but He was the son of a mighty King.

His, too, were the strength and the wisdom, therefore he owed her the more tender love,

For she was framed to listen to, and to be lured by all things. She would eat of the wild, harsh berry, and sport with the glittering snake.

And when she ran, she would often stumble; yet her fall was among grass and flowers, and the earth whereon she fell lightly, itself helped her to rise.

It loved her, for she belonged to it: a happy child! the nursling of earth's warm bosom, beloved by the Chosen of Heaven.

How came it that she was lured from the blissful garden ? Is there other love beside that which is of Heaven and of Earth ?

A love which is dark and secret, which preys upon that which it cannot win ?

Or was their love but hatred for him who loved her ? Him, who dwelt with one whom no foe can reach ;

So that when they sharpened their keenest arrow they could only wound him through her breast ;

And he, beneath the cedar's thick pavilion, knew that his beloved dwelt among a fierce and outcast tribe ;

And from afar he saw her grinding at their mills, and from afar he saw her lead their midnight dance.

She was now their toiling drudge : now was she their minion and their queen ; she was always their thrall and bond-slave.

She wandered with them over many lands ; they gave her to eat of a sweet and maddening root.

They taught her the secret of their spells and death-snares, until, being weaker, she became more vile than they :

The interprestress of their dreams of evil ; and the earth, because it loved her, helped her and clave unto her still.

And to her the fierce whoop of battle, the wild dance upon the withered heath,

The warm dusk gloom of the wigwam, the pow-wow's drowsy chant, seemed more sweet than had been to her the garden. She said, " I will return to it no more."

Yet sometimes in the night's deep silence, when the wind brought on it the odour of the cedar, a thrill would pass across her darkened heart.

Then would she answer her brother softly, and her songs were only less sweet than his own.

PART II.

The forest was dark at noon-day ; the wild beasts came forth from their lairs ;

But not as they come forth at midnight, when the wood wakes to life and tumult ; all was silent as the grave ;

Only from the distance was a crash heard, as of a giant tree that fell.

And in the heart of the gloomy forest, where
the pine-boughs cast their thickest shade,

A red light shone and flickered, like the gleam-
ing of a cruel eye ;

Where the fires of death were kindled, dark
forms fitted round an open space.

In the midst of it was a captive bound to a
stake ; the young braves taunted him in their songs.

I know not if he saw their fierce gestures, or
heard their loud insulting cries.

He had been, like them, a warrior ; yet he was
silent : it was not of them he thought.

And through the dull clangour of the tombés,
the fierce roll and beat of the drums,

He stood, without word or movement. The
Fleka dance begun.

Swift and stealthy were the movements of the
dancers, like the weaving of a muttered charm :

It wove round him in mazy circles, that drew
ever more close and close ;

Like the winding coil of a serpent, that tightens
before it strikes.

And she who led it was a woman, strangely and
richly clad.

The air was dark with arrows, when suddenly
one flashed forth,

That was buried in the captive's breast. I know
not from whose hand it came.

And at that moment his eye met her's; long
sought for, and found at last.

In his look was no rebuke nor question: it left
her not while life remained;

Nor did it change in its steadfast meaning; it
had but one word to say:

"Thou," it said to her, and "thou" she
answered. She, too, had no other word to speak.

She thought not of the cruel arrow; she re-
membered not that she stood among his foes.

Her gaze was, like his, unshrinking. How shall
I speak of what their look told?

None like it hath been exchanged between earth
and heaven. It was recognition, and therefore love.

PART III.

"Oh, that I might look on Him whom I have
pierced! that I might see his face once more!

For when the arrow sank into the heart of my
beloved, then did it cleave through my own.

And when he died, I knew that I loved him. I knew myself worthy of his love.

Now will I arise and look upon his face ; he will not remember mine.

For days have passed over me, and years and ages. I have dwelt in a wild and desert place.

It is long since we played within the happy garden, long since he looked upon me from the cruel stake.

Long, too, since he hath sent me any word of greeting ; yet I know that my brother is yet alive."

Then she arose up with the earliest morning ; it was autumn, and the woods were still ;

But as she passed along the green forest tracks swiftly, a single leaf fell,

A crimson leaf, that dropped upon her bosom lightly. I saw not from what tree it came.

And from the bough one only bird sang sweetly, a bird whose breast has been marked by fire ;

The bird who forsakes not, nor is forsaken ; who stays when the rest have flown.

And as the day drew onwards to the evening, she came forth upon a boundless plain,

Whereof had been reaped a mighty harvest ; the ground was trodden and bare ;

Yet I heard no shouting of the reapers, nor saw gleaners carrying home their sheaves ;

But from afar a sound broke upon the stillness, the clashing of spear and shield ;

The tramp of a countless multitude, as of men who march in order and array of battle.

And when she drew near the happy garden, the garden where she had played of old,

She found herself in a place she knew not, in a place that knew her no more.

For adown its cool moss-grown walks, and beneath its dark fragrant cedars,

Moved ranks and ranks of angels, in exercise for glorious war.

All mailed were they in shining armour, terrible to the eye and heart ;

And at their head was one who was their prince and leader ; terrible, though not clothed in mail,

Him to whom she had been minded to send a secret message. But while she mused thereon in thought,

And lingered beneath the shadow of the cedar, a sudden light sprung forth,

That searched through and through the garden
like a keen insatiate arrow.

Light fell within the rose's heart from the red
flushing of the evening sky.*

It bloomed blood-red against the darkening cedar-
bough ; the lilies stood up in flame ;

Even the marygold looked no longer friendly ;
it was orbed and rayed with fire.

From the weapons and the armour of the angels
flashed lines of intolerable light.

She found no place to flee unto ; no place save
her brother's heart.

She fled onwards swiftly to meet him ; swiftly
he came forward unto her.

He spake to her no word of greeting, but folded
her to his kingly breast.

She clasped her wasted arms about him so
closely that his wound brake forth,

And his blood was sprinkled on her raiment ; it
became shining even like his own.

Like his, too, became her mien and aspect. I
know that they will part no more.

* At eventime it shall be light.—*Zech.* xiv. 7.

THE RED-BREAST.

“Far, far away, is a land of woe and darkness, spirits of evil and fire. Day after day a little bird flies there, bearing in his bill a drop of water to quench the flame. So near to the burning stream does he fly that his feathers are scorched by it, and hence he is named ‘Bron-rhuddyn’ (breast-burned).”—*A Carmarthenshire Legend of the Robin.*

THE souls in bliss to souls in woe
Would fain a message send :

It is not love, above, below,
That loves not to the end ;
This know I, though I little yet
Love's secret apprehend.

But how shall love with love prevail
Its message sweet to take,
What wing that will not droop and fail,
What spirit but will quake,
To bear it through the gloomy vale,
Across the fiery lake ?

In heaven was silence ! sweet to hear
The songs that angels sing,
Yet sweeter then had been the clear
Quick rustle of a wing.
On earth was silence ! to the sun
The eagle soared ; apart
The dove, in grief or love for one
Sate, brooding o'er her heart ;
Wings, wings ! a heaven and earth of wings,
Outspread, unstirred, and free ;
I only heard one little bird
Make answer then, " Send me."

A little bird,* unseen, unheard,
When summer woods are gay,
That flits across a darkening path
And haunts a leafless spray ;
Its song is broken, sweet, and wild,
Its eye is bright and clear ;

* In spring the red-breast retires to woods and thickets. During summer it is rarely to be seen.—*Bewick's British Birds.*

It singeth best when to the West
The sinking sun draws near :
A bird beloved by man and child,
And to its Maker dear.

It trills not with the nightingale,
It moans not with the dove,
It hath no fond heart-piercing wail
Of passion nor of love ;
It mounts not with the lark on wings
Of rapture and desire,
It hath a heart that does not quail,
A wing that does not tire.

*“ I do not fear the valley drear,
Nor yet beyond the gate
What lies, though it indeed be vast,
And dim, and desolate.
My breast is scorched with fire, so near
The burning wind I fly ; to fear
Would now for me be late.*

*“ For me the little children spread
Their crumbs upon the snow,*

*I stay with them, and I am fed
When the swallows flit and go ;
I have eaten of man's daily bread
Too long to shun his woe ;
I have met earth's sleety blast,
I have felt its driving rain :
The time of fear is overpast
For one, the mate of pain ;*

*“ Yea, more ! upon the bitter cross
I saw One hang, who bore
Of all Creation's wrong and loss,
The weight and burden sore ;
And then from out a brow divine,
With anguish pierced and torn,
I strove, with this small beak of mine,
To wrest a single thorn.*

*“ Too slender was my little bill ;
I strove and strove in vain ;
But then, in guerdon of my will,
My bosom met a stain,
Broad, ruddy, deep, that shields from ill,
And marks it unto pain.”*

.

Oh, little bird ! these words of thine
Methinks are true and wise !
For he who looks on man who lives,
Who looks on God that dies,
Baptized within the cloud, the sea,
Baptized within the fire, like thee,
May pass along the valley drear,
And through the gateway dim, nor fear
For aught beyond that lies.*

November 15th, 1870.

* 1 Cor. x. 2.



DESOLATE, BUT NOT FORSAKEN.

This poem is suggested by Rénan's picture (see "Les Apôtres") of the sudden rise of the female character, so deeply lowered by Paganism, to the new and ennobling relations in which it was placed by the first preaching of the Gospel, through the recognition Womanhood receives in Christ.

THEY sat together over the embers of a decaying fire, in a cavern in the depths of the wild forests of a western land,

An aged and woe-worn woman, and a man who was also old ;

But his face was mild and peaceful ; its look was the look of one who hath been greatly beloved ;

While hers was like a volume shut and clasped ; a book that one would fear to open ; that hath some dark secret hid between its leaves.

Her eyes were dim and restless, and in them was an endless search, a question that expects no answer.

And when her gaze ceased to wander, it seemed

fixed on some far distant object: she looked through the cave's low opening into the dark forest gulf beyond; she gazed, but saw nothing.

The air of the cavern was thick and stifling, heavy with some slumberous spell;

Through its entrance, as the wild autumn wind swept by, came a whirl and drift of withered leaves;

While among them, from time to time, was a short quick rustling heard.

The cave was bare and desolate; but Want was not its only occupant.

From the walls came a glint and presage, a murderous gleam and flicker, the flash of the hatchet that hung there with the crooked knife of war;

On the floor lay arrows stored in sheaves, mixed with herbs in bundles, with gourds also and calabashes, and bowls strangely characterized, filled with costly gums,

The tears and life-blood shed by many a giant of the forest, but not gathered there for healing or for balm.

He spoke to her in many words, in a low and pleading voice;

But her replies were brief and careless; they were spoken without change of tone.

"These are goodly things whereof thou tellest me; thy saga is a brave one, but I believe it not.

When our young men fast, have they not also dreams? and our old men, do they not see visions? I myself am one who can divine!

And if I were indeed, as thou sayest, the daughter of a chief so mighty, how came I, as an infant, to be abandoned by all?

If I were lost, it were strange that I were so long unsought for; and if I were forsaken by my father, then is it I who have to forgive."

And as she spake these words her brow darkened, and the red brands fell from the dying fire.

She was silent, and her companion spake not. Who would reply to the words of one who is desperate? to speech that is even as the wind?

And he with whom she talked was a chosen messenger, one who seeing many things observes them not.*

As the fire-light sank yet lower, he looked upon her long and fixedly; and in his eye there was no rebuke.

"When I listen," he said, "to thy voice, I hear not the words thou speakest,

* *Isaiah* xlii. 19, 20.

For it minds me, and thy features mind me, of
one whom I loved best of all.

And now I know that thou art indeed his sister ;
her whom he hath sent me forth to seek."

. "Have I, then," she said scornfully, "also a
brother? and doth he, like my father, love me
well?

Thou art truly a bringer of tidings ; for I knew
not that in earth or heaven

There were any found to love me, now, or even
in days long past,

When I was indeed the gay Malinchi of the
tribe among whom I dwell ;

When I wore the white embroidered tilma, the
rich manta bordered with costly fur ;

When I led for them the war-dance of the arrow,
bells swung with the swaying of my robe :

Then would they listen to my songs at evening.
The chiefs praised me, the young braves stood
silent round.

And now they hold me in derision. Yet, although
they know it not, I am still their queen.

For when they cast me off as undelighting, I
found I was not spurned by all.

In the forest were many voices, and beckoning hands held forth.

Canst thou number the dark pines around us ?
Where the trees are thickest, there is ever one
other near.*

I know not the Father whereof thou speakest ;
but our Mother is doubtless a mighty one.

I listened to her when none were by to hearken
to us ; she taught me the secret of her power ;

So that he who would win love still comes to
me, and he also who hath made a league with
hate.

And to those who have made a covenant with
death, I can send it on a silent sunbeam.†

* Whilst the human race seems to have preserved a remembrance of the trees of Eden, and the happiness once enjoyed beneath their shade, they seem never to have forgotten their fall, and the Evil One by whom it was effected. *Serpent worship is coeval and co-extensive with that of the grove ; wherever one is found, the other is also.*—Rev. R. Taylor, in his work on New Zealand.

† The enchanted sunbeam ; a mode of sorcery practised by the Chipewya Indians. Schoolcraft, when among them, was told of a girl supposed to have been killed while sleeping, by a sunbeam sent by a medicine-man, through a small chink in her tent.

For many are they that work with me ; and
even the white innocent flowers

Have yielded up the secret of their souls, not
less deadly than that beneath the serpent's fang."

"These things," he answered, "may be even as
thou sayest, and thou be evil, as thou dost deem
thyself to be.

I know not the lore whereof thou speakest,
neither of the wrong which thou hast suffered or
hast wrought ;

For I was not instructed to judge thee ; I have
only a message to give

From thy brother, who came forth to seek thee ;
who was stolen, was sold, and was slain.

It was on thee he thought when he was dying ;
and behold he hath sent thee a ring,

To be unto thee a sure token : it is graven with
his name and thine.

Thou speakest of spells and of secrets, but with
him is one more mighty.

He bid me tell thee that he hath redeemed thee
upon the tree under which ye played of old."

Then she said, "Now do I well remember the
garden, and the fourfold stream,

The vine-bough with its heavy cluster, and the apples' goodly scent.

I have surely heard the voices of my father and my brother in the woods at eve.

But the noises in the forest are many, I knew not what words they spake.

But now that thou hast given me his message plainly, I will go to my brother who has sought for me.

It is he who will lead me back unto my father—
the father whom he hath never left."

Then she rose up and prophesied; the dark cavern was filled with light,

So that her companion marvelled greatly.
Was this she who had crouched over the dying fire?

She said, "Who are these with the evening that come flying, even as the doves?

Their wings are swift and open; they cleave the air as with oars of flame.

I hear a quick, joyful rustling. Oh, do ye come all at once,

Sweet friends, by whom I have been so long deserted? love, trust, fair joy, and hope!

Come, then, to my home, and fear not ; though
this cavern be dark and low,

Though this heart is cold and ruined, unmeet
for such gentle guests.

* Ye are used to build among ruins ; at your song
the desert blooms ;

When ye spread forth your radiant plumage, the
serpent's coil unwinds ;

And my soul rushes free to meet you, for it also
is winged and plumed.

Long hath it lain unregarded, among things
broken, defaced, outworn ;

But now shall it shine as doth the silver, and its
feathers be even as gold !

And at the close of the darkening evening, at the
fall of the dying year,

Its voice shall be heard among the woodlands ;
its moan shall be more sweet than song."

October 10th, 1870.

* The Holy Spirit is chiefly used to build its nest among
ruins.—*Archer Butler.*

INTIMATIONS.

(1871.)

NOW that I near the land
Of blessedness, all mute
Things unbeloved, with bland
And loving looks, salute
My gaze ; methinks the brute
Puts on an aspect grand.

My spirit hand in hand
With life moves on, down alleys broad and green.
What forms are these that flit the boughs between ?
All things together stand
At once in flower and fruit ;
The flower in air takes wing,
The soul in earth takes root,
And spreads and pastures like a harmless thing
That crops the herb in presence of its king.

Is this a bird that sings
Within the wood's dim heart, or flower that yields
Her soul unto the sun ? I know not ! fields,
Woods, lanes overflow with subtle sound and
scent ;
A murmur as of winds, and leaves, and wings,
And the keen odour of the pine-bough blent
With the warm lilac's tender ravishment.

Is't morn or ev'ning ? Spring
Or autumn lingering ?
Is't listening now, or speech ?
All things in easy reach
Together lie, and Nature stands at gaze
On inner joy intent,
With lifted finger bent;
To warn or beckon, in her sweet amaze
Of calm astonishment ;
As when a skilled musician, well content
To catch the plausible murmur round him,
gleans
The harvest of the moment, while he leans
O'er his loved instrument.

No more I seek in part
To know or prophesy ;
Unto a mighty heart
Drawn close, the worlds flit by.
The part breathes through the whole,
Life kindles in the clod,
And Nature wins her soul,
And earth its God !



CHRISTUS ET ECCLESIA.

L'ENVOI.

'SPOUSALS of death and love,
My Lord, were thine ! for thee, thy mother
earth

Long waited,* sad and patient till thy birth,
Barren of all save anguish, loss, and strife,
Although the nurse and mother of all life ;
And when with heart elate through joy and pride
She brought thee to thy fair affianced bride,

Thou on the threshold found

She fallen ! sad and free

Thy bride was left, yet bound

For evermore to thee !

* See the remarkable vision of Esdras (ix. chap. 38 verse, et seq.), of a woman who had waited on God in prayer thirty years, and having received him of the Lord, nourished him with great travail.

" So when he grew up and came to the time that he should have a wife, I made a feast,

" And it so came to pass that when my son was entered into his wedding-chamber, he fell down and died."

Thy mother mourns for thee ; she mourns and raves,
And lifts for thee a voice of loud lament
Through all her woods, and on her winds and waves
Fraught with wild wail and awful wonderment ;
And hers are sighs through hollow hemlocks sent,
And grasses on the dreary uplands bent ;
But thy sad bride is silent ; far apart
She moves, as one who knows her lot is hard ;
Thy mother folds her never to her heart ;
Her life is hid in thine ; her way is barred ;
Her end foreseen ; she knoweth she must die
Ere she can come to her beloved nigh.

PART I.

I sing a song, ancient and pitiful, the wonder of
earth and heaven,

Of two lovers, affianced before the worlds were
made, who could only be united through death.

Fair are they in each other's sight, and joyful in

their hour of meeting; but the day of their espousals is bitter.

And if ye ask me to unfold these marvels, I answer, I was not by when the threads were spun

Which weave unseen their meshes between Hades and heaven and earth.

I know not why she, beloved by one so mighty, was abject; why he, the Lord of all things, was suffering and opprest.

I know not why his life was painful and his death so full of shame; I only know that it was for her he endured both life and death.

And for her truly he died once; *but how often hath she died for him?*

For his sake she died to all things that make life lovely; yea, even unto love itself.

And if hers was the glory of the union, had she indeed all the gain?

Is it well with the rough frieze frayed and fretted with the costly inwrought thread of gold?

With the frail jar of porcelain in which an acorn lies buried; with the soul that travails with a mighty incessant birth?

Is it well with the life that is dear unto one far
distant, and hated by the many who are near?

She lived unbeloved by the mother who bare her;
her brethren were full of guile;

Their words to her were now harsh, now mock-
ing; they brooked not that she should be their
queen.

Dark secrets and spells were round her, mystery,
and bondage, and fear. When she plucked the
white woodland flower,

A groan went through the crowded forest, which
said, *Thou hast torn out thy mother's heart;*

So that, wounded by the thorn and brier, she
became like unto them she dwelt with; one grieving
and causing grief.

She disdained the little sister* who alone loved
her; the sister whom it was given her to rear.

She was proud; for though she seemed forsaken,
she knew she was beloved by a king.

And she had listened to the voice of charmers,
who told her that she could not err;

Till she, who had only learnt to walk through

* The natural gifts and virtues.

falling, who spoke ever with a stammering tongue,

Had said, "My footsteps are unerring; when I speak there is none who can gainsay.

I deceive not, nor can any deceive me." *Yet who hath so oft wandered, who been so oft beguiled as she?*

Yet was she beloved in all her wanderings, beloved and watched over from afar.

And I too loved this woman, and followed her through every change;

For I saw that she of all beings created alone had learnt how to love.

And her song was sweeter to me than that of the bird, her smile dearer than the spring's first opening flower.

I mourned when I saw her wander; for her I pleaded and wept.

PART II.

And a time passed over the woman, a time, and a wondrous change.

For I saw her who had strayed in the dim forest, who had hidden in the darksome cave;

Whom the wild beasts of the wood had pitied,
whom the wild fruits of the wood had fed ;

Wrap round her in careless splendour the purple
to which she was not born ;

A robe inwrought with gold and scarlet, a seamless yet not a stainless robe ;

Her feet that had been bare and bleeding trod
now upon the necks of kings.

Her lords were they, and yet her vassals ; she
ruled over them by many spells,

For she could both frown and flatter ; she was
their queen, their mistress, their slave.

She gave them drink of the wine of her enchantments,
full mixed, and poured from a cup of gold.

She flung within it a pearl most precious, where-
with the whole world had been too dearly bought.

And in it, too, was mingled the life-blood of a
heavenly and of a human vine.

She spared not for the crushing of the grape, its
warm tendril, nor its fragrant shoot ;

When she needed her balms and odours, the trees
of the forest wept.

Nor took she any thought for their wounding,
for she trafficked in costly wares,

Ivory, and amber,* and coral, the persons and the souls of men.

Her rowers brought her into deep waters ; their oars flashed silver to the sun.

For her, too, wrought many craftsmen ; the heavy hammer fell

So loud, that one might scarce hear beneath it the beat of either pulse or heart ;

But where she came, still followed the clink of an unseen chain.

She spake fair unto him she hated, unto him who hated her sore.

For he who had known how to draw after him the third part of the stars of heaven,

Knew what was among them written of the Woman and of her Seed.

And the Dragon hateth the Woman ; yet oft did I behold them as friends.

And when I looked thereon, I marvelled ; I marvelled, but I loved her still.

For she was alone and sorrowful ; of her sons there were none to guide her.

* *Ezek.* xxvii. 13.

And oftentimes would she rise up hastily ; she fled into the wilderness, she cast aside her ornaments of gold,

And spake of him whom she alone loved, and said, "I am a widow, and no queen!"

And for her I mourned exceedingly ; for her I pleaded and wept,

That for her there might yet be found on high* a Watcher and a Holy One prevailing,

And for her, among the tender grass, a Root still wet with the dews of heaven.

PART III.

Yet once again I looked upon this woman, in a time that is yet to come.

It was given unto me to see her, because I had loved her well.

I saw her in a time when it grew towards evening, and the light lay low upon the hills,

In a valley which was wide and desert, beside a river unfed by any stream.

Unfed was that river, but ever feeding ; it brought with it the wealth it caused.

* *Dan.* iv. 23.

For though its banks were even like the emerald,
beyond them stretched the desert sands.

But close by the side of the woman sprang up
an ever-springing well,*

Over-arched by a lofty palm-tree, and bordered
by the flowering rush ;

And a slender rill flowed from it, whereat a wolf
lapped even as he ran.

A lion lay couchant near, beside him were three
small white loaves.

And I saw that a time had passed over the
woman, a time and a wondrous change ;

For she was brown and furrowed as the desert
round her, and her attire was poor and mean ;

Gray hairs were upon her, but she regarded
them not, for by her side walked one who was
young,

And his apparel was soft and delicate, such as is
worn by the dwellers in the houses of kings.

Yet she was in his eyes as one who found
favour ; he had said unto her, " Thou art all
fair."

* *St. John* iv. 14 ; and vii. 37 and 38.

She spoke unto him in many words, but it was only given to me to hear a few :

“ *Culpa mea, mea maxima culpa, maxissima culpa mea.*”

Often had these words been spoken in her ear, in many a secret and solitary place ;

But now that she had taken them upon her lips, they were sweeter to him than her sweetest song ;

More costly than had been her bitterest tear ; more precious than the life-blood she had given for him of old.

And he whom she had ever loved heard her. He spake unto her good and comfortable words.

She went up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved ; and I knew that they would part no more.

ANOTHER SOLILOQUY.

THE HUMAN SOUL IN A GARDEN.

“And to the woman God said, ‘I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;’ and Adam called his wife’s name Eve (Chavah), because she was the mother of all living.”—*Genesis* iii.

I.

HERE thy great mother heard
From him she loved, a word,

II.

First spoken when the curse
Had fallen, when for worse

III.

He knew her ; then for best
His soul, her soul confessed.

IV.

Priest of a Priestly race,
And Prophet, full of grace
His lips when he addressed

V.

His Ishi, in the grief
Of sore transgression chief,
Chief also to retrieve.

VI.

He lifted her from shame
In that* new given name,

VII.

When first he called her Eve,
"Mother of all who live."

* Note A.





A PRAYER.

St. Vincent de Paul at the close of his usual petitions was accustomed to offer up an especial prayer for the benefit of the soul in Purgatory, "that was the most forgotten one among all there."

FOR them that lean on Jesu's breast
(The souls beloved), what need to pray ?
For love can still interpret best
What best it knoweth how to say.

For them who look on Jesu's face
(The souls who love), what need to pray ?
Content they pass from grace to grace,*
And speed to glory through delay.

For them who weep at Jesu's feet
(The souls who grieve), what need to pray ?
No joy they miss ; the tear is sweet
As is the kiss, they need but stay.

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Nor lift I praying hands for those
Swift sworded souls that cleave their way
To God through unexampled woes ;
It rests with them for us to pray.*

Nor make I question of your state,
Ye souls and spirits of the blest !
I ask not if ye speed or wait ;
I know ye love, and are at rest.

I ask not if your mighty spoil
Of bliss ye seize at once, or lie
Long ages, shut from grief and toil,
In unexpanded ecstasy.

To me appeals a vaster need,
A deeper gulf upon me cries ;
A weight of souls for whom I plead
The one availing sacrifice.

I pray for them whom darkest fate
Enwraps in its thick, shrouded pall ;

* *The Church never prays for the martyrs, but makes request for their prayers.*

For souls forlorn and desolate,
By none beloved, forgot by all.

For such as on our earth perplexed
Once groaned beneath its sternest ban ;*
By sorer fetters galled and vexed
Than any man hath forged for man :

Whose days were passed in bitter strife,
Who lived unblest, who died unshriven ;
Harsh spirits, ill-agreed with life,
At war with man, with self, with heaven.

Wild sons of Ishmael, desert-born ;
Fierce Esau's children, desert-bred ;
Dark dwellers in the jungle thorn,†
That while they wounded, inly bled.

For these I pray, for these I plead ;
For these, where'er their lot be cast,
My soul, in their extremest need,
Would say, " I go unto these last."

* " Him, the outlaw of his own dark mind."—*Byron*.

† The characteristic feature in the jungle is its thorniness ; the shrubs are thorny, the creepers thorny, even the bamboos are thorny. Everything grows zigzag or jagged, in an inextricable tangle.—*Wallace's "Malay Archipelago."*

If wounded by life's cruel smart,
Or blighted by earth's deadly sin,
They failed from any human heart
Its meed of love and prayer to win ;

If life for them could find no kiss,
No clasp, no pressure warm and fond ;
If love, that seems its way to miss
On earth, may find its way beyond,

I bid them know, beneath the skies
They have not broken yet with all :
For them is one strong prayer to rise,
For them is one warm tear to fall ;

For them is yet one Spirit found,
That tracks them, not to aid or free ;
Content to be with captives bound,
Till captive sinks captivity !

February 4th, 1871.



PART II.

*" I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death ;
but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the
ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of
God."*—George Fox's Journal.

I STAND beside a shoreless sea,
And hear a vast, unmeasured chime,
That breaks in dread monotony
Of woe alternating with crime ;

And through its murmur, ever-vexed,
Of waves, winds, wrecks together hurled,
Loud smitten hands, fierce tongues perplexed,
The loss and outcry of a World,

I hear a voice lamenting, sent
Adown long ages in despair,
Of one who saith, " My punishment
Is more than I can bear."

NOTES.

NOTE A.

"Chavah."

I am indebted to Mr. P. H. Gosse for the suggestion upon which this poem is founded, that it was *after* Eve's transgression that Adam, recognising in her the fulfiller of God's great promise of bringing forth a deliverer for the whole human family ("the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"), so named his wife. No longer Ishi, the mere part and complement of man, but Chavah, "the mother of all living," herself an intelligential, influential force—the chosen transmitter of a spiritual nature.

NOTE B.

"It springs beneath the house of God."

Of the existence of a large supply of water under the Temple there can be no question. While it was yet standing, mention is made by Tacitus of a fountain of ever-flowing water under the Temple, *fons perennis aquæ*, as well as pools

and cisterns for preserving rain-water. Aristeeas and Josephus add, "In order to cleanse away the blood from the victims, of water there is an unfailing supply; *a copious and natural fountain within, gushing over*, and there being, moreover, wonderful underground receptacles in a circuit of five furlongs in the substructure of the Temple, and each of these having numerous pipes, the several streams intercommunicating." Josephus also relates that more than half a mile from the city he was told to stoop down, and heard the sound of gushing waters underground. The natural fountain then beneath the Temple was doubtless augmented by waters brought from a distance, as required for the "divers appointed washings" in the priestly services. Pools near the Temple are mentioned by writers of the third and fourth centuries; and Omar, on the surrender of Jerusalem, A. D. 634, was guided to the site of the ancient Temple (whereon he built his mosque) by the stream of water which issued through a water-channel from it. Whencesoever this water was derived, it afforded Jerusalem an abundant supply of water. Much as Jerusalem suffered in sieges by famine, and its besiegers by thirst, *thirst was never any part of the sufferings of those within*. The superfluous water was and still is carried off underground to what is now "the fountain of the Virgin," and thence again through the rock to the pool of Siloam. Thence it carried fertility to the gardens of Siloam, in Joel's time doubtless "the King's gardens;" still, a modern traveller in the East tells us, "a verdant spot, refreshing to the eye in the heat of summer, while all around is parched and dun." The blood of the victims flowed into the same brook, Kedron, and was a known source of fertility before the land was given to desolation. The waters of Kedron, as well as all the waters of Palestine, must have been more abundant

formerly. Isaiah speaks of it as "flowing softly;" Josephus, of the "abundant fountain;" an official report, of the "fountain gushing forth with abundance of water." Still, its fertilising powers formed but one little oasis, where all around was arid. It fertilised those gardens five miles from the city, but the mid space was waterless, thirsty, mournful. Lower down, the rivulet threaded its way to the Dead Sea through a narrow ravine which became more and more wild, where St. Saba planted his monastery. "A howling wilderness, stern desolation, stupendous perpendicular cliffs, terrific chasms, oppressive solitude," are the terms by which one endeavours to characterise "the heart of this stern desert of Judæa." Such continues to be its character in the remaining half of its course, until it is lost in the Dead Sea, and is transmuted into its saltness. Its valley bears the name of desolation—Wady en Nar, "Valley of Fire." No human path lies along it. The Kedron flows along a deep and almost impenetrable ravine, "in a narrow channel between perpendicular walls of rock, as if worn away by the rushing waters between those desolate chalky hills." That little oasis of verdure was fit emblem of the Jewish people, itself bedewed by the stream which issued from the Temple of God, but, like Gideon's fleece, leaving all around dry. It made no sensible impression out of or beyond itself. But hereafter, *the stream*, the Siloah whose *streamlets*—i.e., the artificial fertilising divisions—*made glad the city of God*, should make the wildest, driest spots of our mortality, *like the garden of the Lord*. The parched earth should shoot up fresh with life; what was by nature barren and unfruitful should bring forth good fruit; places heretofore stained by sin should be purified; nature should be renewed by grace; and this should be *beyond the borders of the promised land*, even in that world which they had left behind when Joshua

brought them in thither. Fresher than the gladliest freshness of nature, brighter than its most kindled glow, is the renewing freshness of grace, and *this issuing from Mount Zion was to be the portion, not of Judæa only, but of the world.*"

The same writer, commenting on the 3rd of Joel, adds: "After the destruction of Antichrist there will, it seems, be still a period of probation in which the grace of God will abound and extend more and more widely. The Prophet Zechariah, who continues the image of *the living waters going out from Jerusalem*, places this gift *after* God had gathered all nations against Jerusalem, and had visibly and miraculously overthrown them."—See "Pusey's Commentary on the Minor Prophets."

NOTE C.

"Trees the desert knows and needs."

See Ezekiel xlvii. 12; also the Prophecy of Joel, commenting on the 3rd chapter of which, verse 18, "A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the Valley of Shittim" (or of Acacia trees), St. Jerome says: "The Shittim tree, or Eastern Acacia (*i.e.*, the Sant or Sandal wood), is a tree which grows in the desert, like a white-thorn in its leaves and colour, but not in its size, which is such that large planks are cut out of it. The wood is very strong, and of incredible lightness and beauty. These trees do not grow in cultivated places, or in the Roman soil, only in the desert of Arabia."

Dr. Tristram writes of it as "a gnarled and thorny tree, like a hawthorn in its habit and manner of growth, but much larger, which flourishes best in the driest situations,

and is scattered more or less numerously over the whole of the Sinaitic Peninsula ;" and adds, that "it is also abundant in the many ravines which open on the Dead Sea at Engedi, and all along its western shores. It flourishes most in the dry beds of extinct water-courses, as at the south-west end of the Dead Sea, and where no other tree can find moisture." The wood of this tree does not decay, and when old becomes like ebony. Of it the ark of God was made—its staves, the table of shewbread, the tabernacle and its pillars, the altar for burnt offerings and of incense. It seems difficult to determine the precise site of the Valley of Shittim, or of Acacia trees. Dr. Pusey inclines to place it on the hither side of Jordan, seven miles and a half beyond the Dead Sea, and connects it with the Plains of Acacias (the rich and sultry plains of Moab, *the last camping-place or station of Israel before entering the Land of Promise*). Hence Joshua sent the spies ; here Balaam prophesied of the Star that should arise out of Israel, even Jesus Christ. This, too, was the place where Israel sinned in Baal Peor, and where Phineas turned aside the displeasure of God.

NOTE D.

" Many rushes, many reeds."

The rush, the chosen emblem of simplicity, humility, and patience ; so used by Dante. See "Purgatorio," Canto 1st :

" With a slender reed

See that thou duly gird him, and his face
Lave, till all sordid stain thou wipe from thence.
This islet all around, there far beneath
Where the wave beats it, on the oozy bed,
Produces store of reeds—no other plant
Lives there.

. . . Then on the solitary shore arrived,
That never sailing on its waters saw
Man that could after measure back his course,
He girt me in such manner as had pleased
Him who instructed; and oh! strange to tell!
As he selected every humble plant,
Wherever one was plucked, another there
Resembling, straightway in its place arose."

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